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EXTRACTS

FROM

WRITINGS OF FRIENDS,

ON

THE SUBJECT OF SLAVERY.

Published by direction of the "Association of Friends for Advocating the Cause of the Slave, and Improving the Condition of the Free People of Color."

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P R E F A C E.

THE following little work is made up of a few extracts from the writings of Friends on slavery, and from the historical account of the progress of our testimony on this subject. It is published with a hope that it may be instrumental in awakening some to increased diligence, by stirring up in their memories the deep suffering and travail of spirit which many of our early Friends passed through in the rise of this testimony. We find in the founder of our religious society a concern—perhaps the earliest manifestation of feeling on the subject—time after time those were raised up to advocate the cause of this deeply injured people. They boldly and zealously avowed their opposition to the practice of holding their fellow creatures in slavery, and their belief that it was utterly at variance with the true principles of Christianity. Surrounded as they were by slaveholders, those who had been brought up to regard the colored man as an inferior being—as property—it is no marvel that their benevolent efforts were violently opposed. But urged on by a sense of duty, and a love of truth, they steadfastly and unwaveringly maintained their ground amidst the fiery persecution to which they were subjected, and the long-cherished and deep-rooted prejudices which they had to encounter. One by one new converts to the truth of their principles were led to espouse the cause, and in the process of time the Society adopted a rule of discipline, prohibiting its members from holding slaves. Our religious society was the first denomination that washed its hands from the inhuman and unchristian practice; but when this was done, and as a society, they were clear of slaveholding, did the testimony fall? No, far from it. Those truly benevolent and philanthropic minds who were enabled clearly to see the injustice of slavery, viewed this as but the beginning of a

mighty reformation. Encouraged and stimulated by the success with which their labors had been crowned in their own society, they resumed their efforts in behalf of the slave with renewed energy. They beheld the red men of the forest inhumanly driven from their homes, barbarous cruelties inflicted on their persons, and their property stolen from them, to gratify the avarice of the white man. They beheld the small remnant of once mighty nations who were left to tell the story of the wrongs which their people had suffered, and they looked forward, with the sorrowful contemplation that but a few more years would complete their extinction. They beheld, also, still greater enormities being practised upon another portion of the human family, who were not only forcibly taken from their native land, from the endearments of *home*, but whose families were rudely torn apart, and the nearest ties of nature rent asunder in a far, a strange country, reduced to slavery—victims—a prey to the same sordid avarice which was exterminating the poor defenceless Indian. In view of these great evils which were invoking the Divine displeasure, they were led to embrace every right opening to plead in behalf of the oppressed, and to declare to the people the truth “that righteousness exalteth a nation,” while “sin is a reproach to any people.” The testimony seemed to grow and increase. Many among other societies were enlisted, and became efficient advocates of emancipation. A Wilberforce, a Clarkson, and many others, united with Friends in promoting this good work. We ardently desire that Friends of the present time may be engaged to exalt still higher the testimony of truth on this subject.

EXTRACTS.



GEORGE FOX.

“ In the West Indies, also, he exhorted those who attended his meetings, to be merciful to their slaves, and to give them their freedom in due time. He considered these as belonging to their families, and that religious instruction was due to these as the branches of them, for whom, one day or other, they would be required to give a solemn account. Happy had it been if these Christian exhortations had been attended to, or if these families only, whom he thus seriously addressed, had continued to be true Quakers; for they would have set an example, which would have proved to the rest of the islanders, and the world at large, that the impolicy is not less than the wickedness of oppression. Thus was George Fox probably the first person who publicly declared against this species of slavery. Nothing, in short, that could be deplored by humanity, seems to have escaped his eye; and his benevolence, when excited, appears to have suffered no interruption in its progress by the obstacles which bigotry would have thrown in the way of many, on the account of the difference of a person’s country, or his color, or his sect.”—*Clarkson’s Portraiture of Quakerism.*

“ It is somewhat remarkable that the first manifestation of a religious concern among Friends on the subject of slavery, occurs in the history of these German Friends settled at Germantown. In the year 1688, they presented a protest, drawn by Daniel F. Pastorius, to the Yearly Meeting then held at Burlington, against buying, selling, or holding men in slavery, as inconsistent with the Christian religion.”—*Friends’ Miscellany.*

“ Third month 12th, 1785, in conversation with our friend John Forman, of North Wales, mention was made of Benjamin Lay. I said, I thought he was the first

Friend that bore a testimony against slave-keeping. He said, 'No, there was one John Farmer, a Friend, on a visit from England that had a very powerful testimony against the oppression of the black people.' He informed me that at a meeting in Pennsylvania, this John Farmer bore his testimony against slave-keeping, and a great man, who kept negroes, being there, got up and desired Friends to look on that man as an open enemy to the country; and some Friends also bearing rather hard against him, persuaded him to make something like an acknowledgment. This so struck John Farmer that he sunk under it, declined in his gift, and never went back to England, but died here.

On his death-bed he said, he was entirely easy about every thing but that of flinching from his testimony at that time, and in that manner."—*John Hunt.*

RALPH SANDIFORD.—“The result of his inquiry was delivered in the following sound opinion: ‘The holding of Negroes in slavery is inconsistent with the rights of man, and contrary to the precepts of the Author of Christianity.’ With this doctrine he began his career in the work of reformation, and in this conviction he closed his benevolent labors, and with them his earthly pilgrimage.”

“From the time of his first arrival in Pennsylvania, until the year 1729, he was zealously engaged, through all the vicissitudes of his fortune, in promulgating his opinions on the subject of slavery. This he did by a strong exposition of his sentiments, when he supposed they might have the least influence on the minds of those whom he met; and so deeply was his mind engaged with this important concern, that he sought opportunities of provoking discussion respecting it wherever he went.”

Memoirs of R. Sandiford, by R. Vaux.

BENJAMIN LAY.

In reviewing the life and character of this distinguished man, we find him possessed with considerable powers of mind, which were assiduously devoted to the promulgation of his views on the subject of slavery, in which he was deeply interested, and against which he bore a faith-

ful and practical testimony. His benevolent mind was enabled to see the sinfulness of this inhuman practice ; and his zeal in advocating its abolition, together with the singular and striking means to which he resorted to impress upon the minds of the people its importance, laid him open to the charge of fanaticism. His appeals were pathetic, and could but be forcibly felt. One day he stood barefoot in the street, on the snow, and noticing a manifestation of sympathy on the part of the passers by :

“Ah, (said he) you pretend compassion for me, but you do not feel for the poor slaves in your fields, who go half clad all winter.”

One of his neighbors inquiring, in great distress, for his lost child, Lay paused and said, “Your child is safe in my house, and you may now conceive of the sorrow you inflict upon the parents of the negro girl you hold in slavery, for she was torn from them by avarice.”

Not long before his death, a friend of Lay’s made him a visit for the purpose of acquainting him that the religious Society of Friends had come to the determination to disown such of their members as could not be persuaded to desist from the practice of holding slaves, or were concerned in the importation of them. The venerable and constant friend and advocate of that oppressed race of men, attentively listened to this heart-cheering intelligence, and after a few moments reflection on what he had heard, he rose from his chair, and in an attitude of devotional reverence poured forth this pious ejaculation : “Thanksgiving and praise be rendered unto the Lord God.” After a short pause, he added, “I can now die in peace.”

Sarah Lay was an intelligent and pious woman, an approved minister of the Gospel in the Society of Friends ; she cordially united with her husband in his disapprobation of slavery, and contributed all in her power to the support of his mind under the trials which he suffered in his exertions to promote a change in public sentiment, respecting the inhumanity and injustice of the custom.

Memoirs of B. Lay, by R. Vaux.

*Extracts from Anthony Benezet's Notes on the
Slave Trade.*

“ You have seen them torn away, children from their parents, parents from their children ; husbands from their wives, wives from their beloved husbands ; brethren and sisters from each other. You have dragged them who had never done you any wrong, perhaps in chains, from their native shore. You have forced them into your ships, like an herd of swine, them who had souls immortal as your own. You have stowed them together as close as ever they could lie, without any regard to decency or conveniency.—And when many of them had been poisoned by foul air, or had sunk under various hardships, ‘you have seen their remains delivered to the deep, till the sea should give up his dead.’ You have carried the survivors into the vilest slavery, never to end but with life : Such slavery as is not found among the ‘Turks at Algiers, no, nor among the heathens in America.’”

“ Are you a man ? Then you should have a human heart. But have you indeed ? What is your heart made of ? Is there no such principle as compassion there ? Do you never feel another’s pain ? Have you no sympathy ? No sense of human woe ? No pity for the miserable ? When you saw the flowing eyes, the heaving breast, or the bleeding sides and tortured limbs of your fellow-creatures, was you a stone or a brute ? Did you look upon them with the eyes of a tiger ? When you squeezed the agonizing creatures down in the ship, or when you threw their poor mangled remains into the sea, had you no relentings ? Did not one tear drop from your eye, one sigh escape from your breast ? Do you feel no relenting now ? If you do not, you must go on till the measure of your iniquities is full. Then will the great God deal with you, as you have dealt with them, and require all their blood at your hands. And at that day it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah than for you : But if your heart does relent, though in a small degree, know it is a call from the God of Love. And *to-day*, if you hear his voice, harden not your heart—*to-day* resolve, God being your helper to escape for your life. Regard not money : All that a man hath will he give for his life. Whatever you lose, lose not your

soul ; nothing can countervail that loss. Immediately quit the horrid trade : At all events be an honest man.”

“And this equally concerns every person who has an estate in our American plantations : Yea, all slave-holders of whatever rank and degree ; *seeing men-buyers are exactly on a level with men-stealers*. Indeed you say, ‘I pay honestly for my goods ; and I am ‘not concerned to know how they are ‘come by.’ Nay but you are : You are deeply concerned, to know that they are not stolen : Otherwise you are partaker with a thief, and are not a jot honest than him. But you know they are not honestly come by : You know they are procured by means nothing near so innocent as picking of pockets, house breaking, or robbery upon the highway. You know they are procured by a deliberate series of more complicated villainy (of fraud, robbery and murder) than was ever practised either by Mahometans or Pagans ; in particular by murders of all kinds ; by the blood of the innocent poured upon the ground like water. Now it is your money that pays the merchant, and thro’ him the captain and African butchers. You therefore are guilty : Yea, principally guilty, of all these frauds, robberies, and murders. You are the spring that puts all the rest in motion ; they would not stir a step without you—Therefore the blood of all these wretches, who die before their time, whether in their country or elsewhere, lies upon your head. The blood of thy brother, (for whether thou wilt believe it or no, such he is in the sight of him that made him) crieth against thee from the earth, from the ship and from the waters. O ! whatever it cost, put a stop to its cry, before it be too late. Instantly, at any price, were it the half of thy goods, deliver thyself from blood guiltiness ! Thy hands, thy bed, thy furniture, thy house, thy land, are at present stained with blood. Surely it is enough ; accumulate no more guilt : Spill no more the blood of the innocent ! Do not hire another to shed blood ! Do not pay him for doing it ! Whether thou art a Christian or no, shew thyself a man ; be not more savage than a lion or a bear.

“Perhaps thou wilt say, ‘I do not buy any NEGROES : I only use those left me by my father.’ But is it enough to satisfy your own conscience ! Had your father, have you, has any man living, a right to use another as a Slave ?

It cannot be, even setting REVELATION aside. It cannot be, that either war, or contract, can give any man such a property in another as he has in his sheep and oxen : Much less is it possible, that any child of man, should ever be born a Slave. Liberty is the right of every human creature, as soon as he breathes the vital air. And no human law can deprive him of that right, which he derives from the law of nature. If therefore you have any regard to justice, (to say nothing of mercy, nor of the revealed law of GOD) render unto all their due. Give Liberty to whom Liberty is due, that is to every child of man, to every partaker of human nature. Let none serve you but by his own act and deed, by his own voluntary choice ; away with whips, chains, and all compulsion. Be gentle towards all men. And see that you invariably do unto every one, as you would he should do unto you."

*Testimony of Yorkshire Quarterly Meeting concerning
John Woolman.*

"He was deeply concerned on account of that inhuman and iniquitous practice of making slaves of the people of Africa, or holding them in that state ; and on that account we understand he hath not only wrote some books, but travelled much on the continent of America, in order to make the negro-masters (especially those in profession with us) sensible of the evil of such a practice. And though in this journey to England, he was far removed from the outward sight of their sufferings, yet his deep exercise of mind remained ; as appears by a short treatise he wrote in this journey, and his frequent concern to open the miserable state of this deeply injured people."

The following example of faithfulness to the dictates of truth, in what was at that time considered a small thing—but which was instrumental in effecting the liberation of several of his fellow-beings, is well worthy of imitation.

"About this time, an ancient man of good esteem in the neighborhood, came to my house to get his will wrote. He had young negroes ; and I, asking him privately how he purposed to dispose of them, he told me : I then said, I cannot write thy will without breaking my own peace ; and respectfully gave him my reasons for it. He signified that he had a choice that I should have wrote it ; but as I

could not, consistent with my conscience, he did not desire it; and so he got it wrote by some other person. And a few years after, there being great alterations in his family, he came again to get me to write his will: his negroes were yet young; and his son, to whom he intended to give them, was, since he first spoke to me, from a libertine become a sober young man; and he supposed, that I would have been free, on that account, to write it. We had much friendly talk on the subject, and then deferred it: and a few days after, he came again, and directed their freedom; and so I wrote his will.

“Near the time the last mentioned friend first spoke to me, a neighbour received a bad bruise in his body, and sent for me to bleed him; which being done, he desired me to write his will. I took notes; and amongst other things, he told me to which of his children he gave his young negro. I considered the pain and distress he was in, and knew not how it would end: so I wrote his will, save only that part concerning his slave; and, carrying it to his bed-side, read it to him: and then told him, in a friendly way, that I could not write any instruments by which my fellow-creatures were made slaves without bringing trouble on my own mind. I let him know that I charged nothing for what I had done; and desired to be excused from doing the other part in the way he proposed. We then had a serious conference on the subject; and at length, he agreeing to set her free, I finished his will.”

“Should we contemplate on their circumstances, when suddenly attacked, and labor to understand their inexpressible anguish of soul who survive the conflict;—should we think on inoffensive women, who fled at the alarm, and at their return saw that village in which they and their acquaintance were raised up, and had pleasantly spent their youthful days, now lying in a gloomy desolation; some shocked at finding the mangled bodies of their near friends amongst the slain; others bemoaning the absence of a brother, a sister, a child, or a whole family of children, who, by cruel men, are bound and carried to market to be sold, without the least hopes of seeing them again:—add to this, the afflicted condition of these poor captives, who are separated from family connexions, and all the comforts

arising from friendship and acquaintance;—carried amongst a people of a strange language, to be parted from their fellow-captives,—put to labor in a manner more servile and wearisome than what they were used to, with many sorrowful circumstances attending their slavery;—and we must necessarily see that it belongs not to the followers of Christ to be parties in such a trade, on the motives of outward gain.”

“The upright in heart cannot succeed the wicked in their wickedness; nor is it consonant to the life they live, to hold fast an advantage unjustly gained.”

“It is granted by many, that the means used in getting them (the slaves) are unrighteous, and that buying them, when brought here, is wrong; yet as setting them free is attended with some difficulty, they do not comply with it; but seem to be of the opinion, that to give them food and raiment, and keep them servants, without any other wages, is the best way to manage them that they know of: and hoping that their children after them will not be cruel to the negroes, conclude to leave them as slaves to their children.

“While present outward interest is the chief object of our attention, we shall feel many objections in our minds against renouncing our claim to them, as the children of slaves: for, being prepossessed with wrong opinions, prevents our seeing things clearly, which to indifferent persons, are easy to be seen.”

“If we seriously consider that liberty is the right of innocent men;—that the mighty God is a refuge for the oppressed;—that in reality we are indebted to them;—that they being set free, are still liable to the penalties of our laws, and as likely to have punishment for their crimes as other people: this may answer all our objections. And to retain them in perpetual servitude, without just cause for it, will produce effects, in the event, more grievous than setting them free would do, when a real love to truth and equity was the motive to it.”

“Negroes are our fellow-creatures, and their present condition amongst us requires our serious consideration. We know not the time when those scales in which mountains are weighed, may turn. The Parent of mankind is

gracious ; his care is over his smallest creatures ; and a multitude of men escape not his notice. And though many of them are trodden down, and despised, yet he remembers them. He seeth their affliction, and looketh upon the spreading, increasing exaltation of the oppressor. He turns the channels of power, humbles the most haughty people, and gives deliverance to the oppressed, at such periods as are consistent with his infinite justice and goodness. And wherever gain is preferred to equity, and wrong things publicly encouraged, to that degree that wickedness takes root, and spreads wide amongst the inhabitants of a country, there is real cause for sorrow to all such whose love to mankind stands on a true principle, and who wisely consider the end and event of things."

John Woolman's Works.

Extract from William Tuke's letter to R. Haines, on the death of John Woolman :

" His last testimony was in a meeting for discipline, on the subject of the slave-trade ; remarking, that as Friends had been solicitous for and had obtained relief from many of their sufferings, so he recommended this oppressed part of the creation to their notice, that they may in an individual capacity, as way may open, present their hardships and sufferings to those in authority, especially the legislative power in this kingdom. I am persuaded that this last public labor made a deep impression on many minds. I wish the great sufferings he hath passed through on account of this oppressed and injured people may deeply affect the minds of those in America among whom he hath faithfully and painfully labored, and of whom he said he was clear."—*Friends' Miscellany.*

JAMES PEMBERTON.

" His philanthropy was not limited to any one sect or class of people,—it flowed towards all, without respect to nation, condition, or color. The multiplied sufferings and evils inflicted on the African race, made such impression on his mind through a long period of his life, that he directed a considerable portion of his attention, and employed much of his time, in endeavours to meliorate the wretchedness, and improve the condition of this degraded

class of our fellow beings. And he lived to witness the fruits of the unwearied efforts of the advocates of the natural rights of men. In the year 1774, he was among the first of those philanthropists, "who," as Clarkson says, "undertook the important task of bringing those into a society, who were friendly to this cause;" and who succeeded in establishing the "Society for promoting the abolition of Slavery, the relief of free negroes unlawfully held in bondage, and for improving the condition of the African race." He filled several important offices in the Society, and continued a member thereof until his decease. During all this time, his exertions were indefatigable in the promotion of those benevolent objects for which it was instituted.

James Pemberton, A. Benezet, and many other prominent Friends were instrumental in forming this Society. The former held, for a series of years, the offices of President and Vice President. They succeeded in awakening considerable abhorrence of Slavery, by their untiring zeal in the cause, and spirited appeals to their fellow citizens in behalf of the slave. In this great work, they were associated with Dr. Benjamin Franklin, B. Rush, Tench Coxe, and many others of other societies.

WARNER MIFFLIN.

"It is from a sense of duty both to myself, and to my country that I make these observations, and state some things interesting to both. It was on this ground I became engaged *with others* to urge the subject of our righteous concern to different legislatures, in order to remove legislative obstacles from those who are disposed to liberate their slaves, and to protect those who are set free. And though salutary laws have been enacted in some states, for which I believe a blessing will attend them, yet still the evil is continued in other parts where conscientious persons are discouraged from liberating their slaves, as by existing laws the blacks are liable again to be taken in bondage by dissolute people who are disposed to avail themselves of *unrighteous laws*, and in many instances great numbers have been cruelly seized and sold into renewed bondage. Doth not this excite a fearful apprehension, that the measure of their iniquity is filling, who so

act, and that they are ripening for the chastisement which shall be poured upon the workers of iniquity. An additional enormity prevailing, is the kidnapping of free blacks, carrying them off and selling them for slaves, in some instances whole families, and in others separating them one from another.

It is urged as a great objection to the emancipation of the blacks, their disposition for pilfering. But is not the depriving of them of that most valuable property, liberty, and keeping them under the oppression of slavery, the very cause of this fault. Being pinched at times for every necessary of life, they put forth a hand to partake of what in equity their labor gives them a claim to, from their possessors, where due support is withheld, and these practices becoming habitual in their impoverished condition, they discriminate not sufficiently between the property of those they labor for and others, but when opportunity presents frequently supply their wants from all alike, except when a principle of religious rectitude restrains from all such acts. I attempt not to palliate the crime."

Having liberated a considerable number of black people, which were in his possession, he assisted his father, in a like laudible concern, to liberate many more, who were in the condition of slaves. And when our religious society, in general, became clear of this unrighteous imposition upon mankind, his concern appeared to be *enlarged, to labor amongst other people*. Forcibly expostulating with ministers and clergymen, of different denominations and degrees,—with delegates in congress in different states,—with governors, judges, and magistrates, *in Christian boldness*,—being influenced by wisdom from above,—he endeavored to dissuade rulers from countenancing or encouraging the unrighteous traffic in human flesh—and to convince all classes of the injustice, cruelty, and oppression connected with enslaving, or holding in slavery, our fellow men. He was much concerned, that professing Christians might not be accessory to add to the guilt already incurred, on account of this cruel traffic and practice; and which he believed would occasion the pouring forth of the Lord's indignation upon those places where such abominations continued. Under these exercises, his diligence and zeal, in advocating the cause of the oppress-

ed, further appears, by many letters, writings, and notes, which he left behind him.

Being endowed with a benevolent mind, accompanied in an eminent degree with that philanthropy which characterizes the true Christian, he was a most distinguished friend to that poor and despised race of mankind, the African people, for whose emancipation from a state of bondage, he not only labored in his own society, so long as the members of it continued to hold slaves, but on all occasions, when his lot was cast amongst those who continued to countenance the unrighteous traffic in human flesh, he was concerned tenderly and faithfully to warn them of the danger to which they were exposing themselves; and of the distress and misery it would bring upon them in a dying hour, if they continued in practices so repugnant to that righteous law held forth in the precepts of the gospel, "Do unto all men, as ye would they should do unto you." And ever since the abolition of the slave trade in these states, he seldom failed at the annual assemblies, (when he was present,) in his own society to hold up to view, in a very affecting manner, the *cause* of this afflicted people; exciting in his fellow members a tender feeling for their sufferings under the hand of oppression, and recommending the exercise of the spirit of prayer to the great Controller of events, for their deliverance and more general emancipation from a state of slavery; as also an unremitting attention to their guarded education, and religious instruction.—*Friends Miscellany.*

Extracts from manuscripts of John Parrish.

"All the reasoning in favor of Slavery is erroneous, such as their being of the stock of Ham not having hair as long or as straight as ours, or their being of a different color, etc. It is enough to know, and it cannot be denied, that they are a part of God's creation—*men.*"

"I feel my mind bound from a sense of duty, to speak *plainly* in espousing the cause of the slave, in opening my mouth for the dumb, for those who have no representatives to appear in their behalf."

"I am under the necessity of differing with my friend when he supposes that the distinction which nature has made will divide us into parties, and produce convulsions

which will probably never end but in the extermination of one or the other race. I am satisfied that this manner of treating the subject tends very much to retard the work of emancipation."

"Can it be doubted that the groans of this oppressed part of the human family have reached the ears of the Lord God of Sabbath. Then surely this is an object which those who trust in Providence will be convinced would be aided by the Author of our being, should we invoke his blessing upon our endeavors."

"I believe slavery is one chief cause of wars and calamities." "Did any of the European nations, or even the savages of the wilderness ever equal the barbarities exercised by some of the slaveholders towards their slaves, not only in the infliction of cruel corporeal punishment, but in the separation of the nearest ties of nature."

Extract from an Epistle issued by the London Yearly Meeting, 1772.—"It likewise appears that the practice of holding negroes in oppression and unnatural bondage, hath been so successfully discouraged by Friends, in some of the colonies, as to be considerably lessened. We cannot but approve of these salutary endeavors, and earnestly entreat they may be continued, that, through the favor of Divine providence, a traffic so unmerciful and unjust in its nature to a part of our species, made, equally with ourselves, for immortality, may come to be considered by all in its proper light, and be utterly abolished, as a reproach to the Christian profession.—*Lond. Epist.* p. 307.

The Epistle of 1786 says: "We have received intelligence from various quarters, that the testimony which we have borne against slavery, continues to gain ground: and we have great encouragement to persevere in our endeavors to *excite* a general abhorrence of that oppressive practice. p. 353.

Extract from the Minutes of the Yearly Meeting held in Philadelphia, on 24th of Ninth month, and also by adjournments from the 10th to the 15th of the Twelfth month, 1798, inclusive.

"And the enormous iniquity of enslaving and trading in the persons of men, which crying abomination renew-

edly impressing the minds of many Friends with very painful sensations, under the awful prospect of Divine judgments manifest in the earth, it is desired that we may individually labor for qualification to offer up effectual, fervent prayers for the removal of this *unspeakable wickedness* from our land. And that the Meeting for Sufferings, more especially, may suffer NO season to escape unimproved wherein there may be an opening for the relief of this grievously afflicted people, or for holding up our religious testimony against every species of this abominable evil."

Extracts from a petition from the meeting for Sufferings, London, Eleventh month, 28th, 1783.

"We are engaged under a sense of duty, to bear a public testimony against a species of oppression which, under the sanction of national authority, has long been exercised upon the natives of Africa, is grown up into a system of tyranny, and is unhappily become a considerable branch of the commerce of this kingdom: an oppression which in the injustice of its origin, and the inhumanity of its progress, has not, we apprehend, been exceeded, or even *equalled*, in the *most barbarous* ages.

"If we bring this matter home and as Job proposed to his friends, "put our soul in their soul's stead:" if we consider ourselves, and our children, as exposed to the hardships which those people lie under, in supporting an imaginary greatness:

"Did we in such case, behold an increase of luxury and superfluity among our oppressors, and therewith feel an increase of the weight of our burdens, and expect our posterity to groan under oppression after us:

"When we were hunger-bitten, and could not have sufficient nourishment, but saw them in fulness, pleasing their taste with things fetched from far:

"When we were wearied with labor, denied the liberty to rest, and saw them spending their time at ease; when garments answerable to our necessities, were denied us, while we saw them clothed in that which was costly and delicate;

"Under such afflictions, how would these painful feelings rise up as witnesses against their pretended devotion!

And if the name of their religion were mentioned in our hearing, how would it sound in our ears, like a *word which signified self-exaltation and hardness of heart!*

“ When a trade is carried on productive of much misery, and they who suffer by it are some thousands of miles off, the danger is the greater of not laying their sufferings to heart:

“ Many goans arise from dying men, which we hear not. Many cries are uttered by widows and fatherless children, which reach not our ears. Many cheeks are wet with tears, and faces sad with unutterable grief, which we see not. Cruel tyranny is encouraged. The hands of robbers are strengthened; and thousands reduced to the most abject slavery, who never injured us.

“ Were we for the term of one year only to be eye-witnesses to what passeth in getting these slaves; was the blood which is there shed, to be sprinkled on our garments; were the poor captives, bound with thongs, heavy laden with elephants’ teeth, to pass before our eyes, in their way to the sea;

“ Were their bitter lamentations, day after day, to ring in our ears, and their mournful cries in the night, to hinder us from sleeping!

“ Were we to hear the sound of the tumult, when the slaves on board the ships attempt to kill the English, and behold the issue of those bloody conflicts: what pious man could be a witness to these things, and see a trade carried on in this manner, without being deeply affected with sorrow?”

“ Our religious society in these kingdoms, and in North America, have for many years tenderly sympathized with this unhappy people, under their complicated sufferings, and have endeavored to procure them relief: nor has their cause been without other advocates; whose numbers we have with much satisfaction observed to increase. The expectation of many, who are anxiously concerned for the suppression of this national evil, is now under Providence, fixed upon the wise and humane interposition of the legislature; to whom, with dutiful submission, we earnestly recommend the serious consideration of this important subject. * * * That so the blessing of those who are ready to perish may rest upon you, and this nation

may no longer, on their account, remain obnoxious to the righteous judgments of the Lord, who, in the most awful manner, declared by his prophet, ‘That the land should tremble, and every one mourn that dwelleth therein, for the iniquity of those who oppress the poor, and crush the needy;’ and who likewise pronounced a ‘woe unto him him, that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; that useth his neighbor’s service without wages, and giveth him not for his work.

Signed by order of the Meeting for Sufferings, London,
the 28th day of the Eleventh month, 1783, by

JOHN ADY,
Clerk to the Meeting.”

EXTRACT FROM JACOB LINDSEY’S LETTER.

He was sold by his master to one H——, who bought in slaves for the *Georgia monsters*; to whom he was sold, and in their possession for fifteen days: after which, he cut his chain, and made a marvellous escape.

Oh! surely I may say, I shudder, and my tears involuntarily steal from my eyes, for my poor oppressed, afflicted, tormented, black brethren;—hunted, frightened to see a white man,—torn from every source of comfort that is worth living for in this stage of being. The tears,—the groans,—the sighs of these, have scarcely ascended to the ears of the Lord of Sabbaoth;—and as a thick cloud, is awfully suspended over this land. I tenderly and tremblingly feel for poor masters, involved in the difficulty. I am awfully awakened into fear, for our poor country, with the language, “I gave her time and place to repent; but she repented not: therefore I, saith the Supreme Arbitrator of nations, Judge of all the earth, will,” &c. Why do I thus digress? But to return. Inclosed is a piece of Skinner’s vest, as a token to Fanny his wife, that he is alive, and that there is no deception in the business; more sure than the token to Jacob, of the death of poor Joseph!

Oh! the Georgia Ishmaelites! How abhorrent their trade! How dark their poor souls, (O my soul, come not thou into their secret!) in sacrificing at *mammon’s altar*.

Extracts from Elias Hicks’ Observations on Slavery.

“I shall only add, as a farther apology for the present edition, that the evil still continues: that there are still

slave holders, and consumers of the produce of the labor of slaves, wrested from them by violence.”

“ And as the slave holder can have no moral right whatever to the man he styles his slave, nor to the produce of his labor, he cannot possibly convey any to a second person by any transfer he can make : for, having nothing but a criminal possession himself, he can convey nothing to a second person but the same possession : and should this possession be continued through a line of transfer to the twentieth person, still it would be nothing more than the same criminal possession that was vested in the first possessor, and would convey no moral right whatever.”

“ For, although the first possessor committed the act of violence, when he took from the man he styles his slave his liberty, and compelled him to work, and by the same cruel force took from him the produce of his labor ; yet every purchaser of such slave and the produce of his labor, if he is apprized of the criminal circumstance attending it, is as guilty as the first perpetrator ; and should such slave and the produce of his labor pass through the hands of twenty persons, all knowing at the time of transfer the criminal circumstances attending, each would be guilty of the entire crime of the first perpetrator. This being assented to, and I conceive it is incontrovertible, I have a hope that this edition may produce a good effect, and tend to raise up many more faithful advocates in the cause of this deeply oppressed people, who may be willing to suffer every necessary privation, rather than be guilty of the least thing that may, in any degree, possibly strengthen the hands of their oppressors. I therefore recommend this little treatise to the candid and impartial consideration of the reader, and subscribe myself his sincere friend,

ELIAS HICKS.”

“ Q. Does the highway robber, that meets his fellow-citizen on the highway, and robs him of all the property he has in his present possession, and then leaves him at liberty, without injuring his person, commit as high an act of felony, as he that steals or buys, or takes a man by violence, and reduces him to the wretched and degraded state of a slave for life ?

“ A. No ! in no wise. Which answer is founded on the self-evident proposition, that it is more criminal to rob

a man of his liberty and property, than only to rob him of his property.

“Q. Does it lessen the criminality and wickedness of reducing our fellow creatures to the abject state of slavery, and continuing them therein, because the practice is tolerated by the laws of the country we live in?”

“A. No! by no means. Because, every rational creature knows, or ought to know, that no law of men or nations, can alter the nature of immutable justice. The criminality remains as great in all cases of slavery, when inflicted without any criminality of the individual made a slave, under the sanction of law, as when it is not; and in some cases, greater: as in the instance of those governments, where they are not only guilty of the cruelty and oppression of reducing, by mere power, without any possible plea of right, their fellow creatures who have equally a right with themselves to liberty, and the purchase of redemption by a Saviour’s blood, to the abject and wretched state of slaves, but are adding sin to sin, by making and continuing cruel laws to hold them still longer under the galling yoke.

“Q. Would it be right and consistent with justice and equity, for the legislatures of the several states, and others concerned, to make laws entirely to abolish slavery in their respective states?”

“A. It would, doubtless, be entirely right, and perfectly consistent with equity and justice to make such laws; and nothing, I apprehend, can exculpate them from the charge of blood-guiltiness short of so doing: as, no doubt, many of the poor victims of slavery suffer daily to the shedding of their blood, under the hands of some of the cruel men who pretend to be their masters, because they do not at all times immediately submit to their cruel and arbitrary wills.

“Q. Would it not give just occasion for those who still have slaves in their possession, and especially to such as have lately purchased them, at a dear rate, to complain of wrong in thus taking from them, without their consent, what they esteem as their real property?”

“A. The making and enforcing such laws cannot possibly give just occasion for any such complaint; as it is impossible for any man to gain any just property in a ra-

tional being, as a slave, without his consent; for, neither the slave dealer nor the planter have any moral right to the person of him they style their slave, to his labor, or to the produce of it; so, they can convey no right in such person, nor in the produce of his labor to another; and whatever number of hands they may pass through, (if the criminal circumstances appertaining thereto be known to them at the time of the transfer,) they can only have a criminal possession; and the money paid either for the slave or for the produce of his labor, is paid to obtain that criminal possession, and can confer no moral right whatever; and if the death of the person called a slave, be occasioned by the criminal possession, the criminal possessor is guilty of murder; and we who have knowingly done any act which might occasion his being in that situation, are accessaries to the murder, before the fact; as by receiving the produce of his labor, we are accessaries to the robbery after the fact. Therefore, I conceive, it must appear clear and agreeable to truth and justice, that a man who should dare to be so hardy as to buy a fellow creature, whose liberty is withheld from him by violence and injustice, ought not only to be obliged to set him free, and to forfeit the purchase money, but likewise to make full satisfaction to the person he had injured by such purchase."

Most of these faithful laborers have long since been called from works to rewards. *They* were far in advance of the general feeling on the subject, and labored ardently to awaken sympathy in the public mind. We, their descendants, have lived to see the seed which they have sown, spring up in a strong and greatly increasing interest, among mankind at large. The subject has now taken a deep hold of the public mind; the axe of Truth has been laid at the root of the corrupt tree of Slavery; already we hear the agitation of its foliage as the wind of investigation whistles through it; already have its very extreme branches begun to tremble; already do we hear the voice of the cracking of the tree, which foretells its fall. And shall we, the descendants of Fox, as unworthy sons of Woolman and Benezet, falter on account of the agitation which is, as it were, shaking the very earth? Fear not.

When the tree falls, it may be with a crash that will rebound from one end of the land to the other. The introduction of the spiritual dispensation of the Christian religion was not effected without agitation.—The revival of spiritual Christianity—the peaceable doctrines of Quakerism—were not promulgated without excitement and determined opposition. Truth and error, in their controversy, have ever, for a time, struggled fiercely for the mastery; but when faithfully adhered to, truth has always gained the victory. Every reform, in its beginning, has excited opposition and persecution—and we cannot suppose that the righteous cause of Universal Libery will achieve a victory over the injustice of Slavery, and the established and wicked customs and prejudices of men, with less excitement.

Then, let us press forward with hope and confidence in the justice of the Creator, trusting that he will smile upon our endeavors to carry forward this reformation. Let us be found in the fast that he has chosen, in loosing the bands of wickedness, in breaking every yoke, and letting the oppressed go free.





WERT
BOOKBINDING
Grantville, Pa
Jan - Feb 1989
We're Quaintly Bound

